

International Organizations

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AND now we get to the trendiest world trend of globalization. This chapter consists of brief explanations of some entities that fall outside, or rather across, state boundaries—global players in a global age. We call them **supranationalist** organizations. Above and beyond the national level, these organizations play an increasingly important role in what is happening across our planet. But who are they? Where did they come from? How are we supposed to know this stuff? I don't know, friends. If the Plaid Avenger doesn't tell you these things, who will?

Supranationalist organizations are groups of states working together to achieve a common, or outlined, objective. This is another fairly new concept in human history, as states or nations have spent most of their time doing the opposite: beating the daylights out of each other or undercutting each other at every available opportunity. So why do countries now work together? The Plaid Avenger sees order in the universe; we can classify cooperation into three main classes: economic, defensive, and cultural.

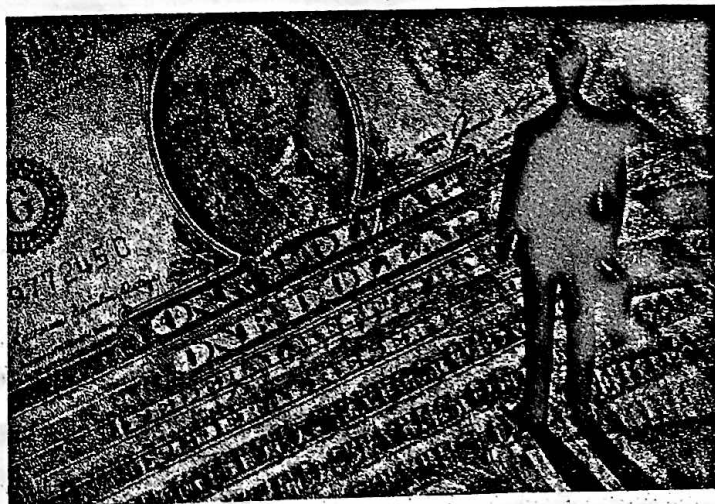
I'll introduce you to the more important and happening entities here, but by no means is this list exhaustive. This chapter will also serve as a functioning reference for you as you progress through the rest of the book; come back often to refresh your memory when you see these acronyms appear in the regional chapters.



ECONOMIC ENTITIES—SHOW ME THE MONEY

Money. Who doesn't want it? Not any of the states of the world, that's for sure. A great way to make more money, if you are a country, is to make some trade deals with other countries. I'll buy all my bananas from you if you buy all of your wheat from me—sound good? On top of that, I won't put an import tax on your bananas, but if any other countries try to sell bananas here, I'll tax the heck out of them. Deal? This is the essence of **trade blocs** which are, as you might have guessed, a dandy vehicle for increasing trade between two countries . . . or perhaps among a whole bunch of countries, depending upon how many new kids are in your bloc.

Many economists believe that **free trade** between countries increases competition, which decreases prices for consumers, which in turn increase consumption of products . . . which ultimately benefits producers and consumers alike! Get governments out of the way, and let the market rule! For this reason, both the United States and the European Union are trying their hardest to promote "trade blocs" or "free trade zones" with neighboring countries, so that they can improve economic performance and increase sales. Even countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia have caught the bug.





THE UNITED NATIONS

193 Members: All the sovereign states in the world except Vatican City. There are currently 193 of them. Even the Swiss finally joined a few years ago.

Summary: The United Nations, or UN, was founded in 1945 as a successor to the League of Nations. Like the League, the goal of the UN is to maintain global peace. Unlike the League, no major world wars have happened on the UN's watch. This is not to say that the United Nations has achieved global peace. In fact, UN "peacekeepers" have been on hand to witness some of the most egregious violations of human rights in recent history.

The UN is made up of several bodies, the most important of which is the Security Council (see Security Council section). The second most important body in the UN is the General Assembly where each of the 193 member nations has a representative and a vote. The General Assembly has produced gems such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the lesser known *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*. The General Assembly is clearly the home of utopian thinkers, but not of any real international power. This leaves the major world powers like the US and China free to ignore everything that the General Assembly says, without even having to waste the time vetoing it.

The UN also includes hundreds of sub-agencies that you've heard of before, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. The WHO is in charge of coordinating efforts in international public health. UNICEF (The United Nation's Children Fund) provides health, educational, and structural assistance to children in developing nations. Both agencies are supported by member nations and private donors. UNICEF also receives millions of pennies collected each year by children on Halloween. Just a handful of the hundreds of other UN agency acronyms you may have heard of include the FAO, IAEA, UNESCO, IMF, WMO, and the WTO.

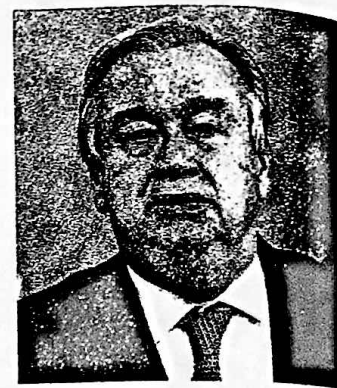
Critics often charge the UN with being ineffective. This is largely true, but the United Nations was never really intended to be a global government. The best way to view the UN is a forum in which nations can communicate and work together. The UN is ill-equipped to punish any strong member for violations. If a member is especially naughty, a strongly worded UN resolution might recommend voluntary diplomatic or economic sanctions. Perhaps after World War III, the United Nations will be once again renamed and given stronger international authority. If there is anything left of us.

THE REAL POWER AT THE UN: THE UN PERMANENT SECURITY COUNCIL

5 Members: US, UK, Russia, China, and France and 10 other rotating positions.

The Security Council is composed of five permanent members (the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, China, and France) and ten other elected members serving rotating two year terms. The Security Council is charged with responding to threats to peace and acts of aggression. Basically, for anything to get done, the Security Council has to do it. But things rarely get done because each of the five permanent members has the power to veto and prevent any resolution that they do not like. A single veto from any one of the permanent members kills the resolution on the spot. This group of rag-tag veto-wielding pranksters is currently the ultimate source in interpreting international law. Most of the Cold War saw little to no consensus on anything, as Team US/UK faced off against Team Russia/China. Whatever one team tried to push, the other team generally would veto. The Frenchies vetoed according to mood and lighting of the room. Even today, votes tend to fall along these same alliance lines.

The other ten rotating members of the Council do not have veto power, but are often used as a coalition building tool to get things done. E.g.: During the build-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the US worked very hard to get as many



UN Secretary General António Guterres



members of the Council as possible to back the resolution for war in Iraq, knowing full well that China and Russia would veto it. This was a strategic move to show broad support for the war, even though the US accepted up front that the resolution would not be passed.

There is currently speculation that new members may be added to the UN Permanent Security Council. The prime candidates are Germany and Japan. The United States supports their candidacies; maybe because they have over 270,000 military personnel (including dependents of military) in Germany and Japan combined, and they are staunch US allies. There is also talk of including Brazil or India, or even more remotely, an "Islamic member" or an "African member." But seriously, what incentive does the Security Council have to dilute their powers? Remember, all five would have to agree to let a new member in, so while the United States would certainly support the incorporation of Japan, China would be more likely to tell Japan to go commit **Seppuku**, veto-style. However, the four most likely members (Japan, Germany, Brazil, and India) have released a joint statement saying that they will all support the others' entry bids. The best argument for enlargement is that Japan and Germany are the second and third largest contributors to the UN general fund, and thus deserve more power. Regardless, don't count on the Security Council getting any bigger unless serious global strife starts going down, which it will, sooner or later.



NATO

28 Members: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, the United States of America, France, the United Kingdom, Iceland, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Greece, Turkey, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Canada. Newest members inducted in 2009: Albania and Croatia!

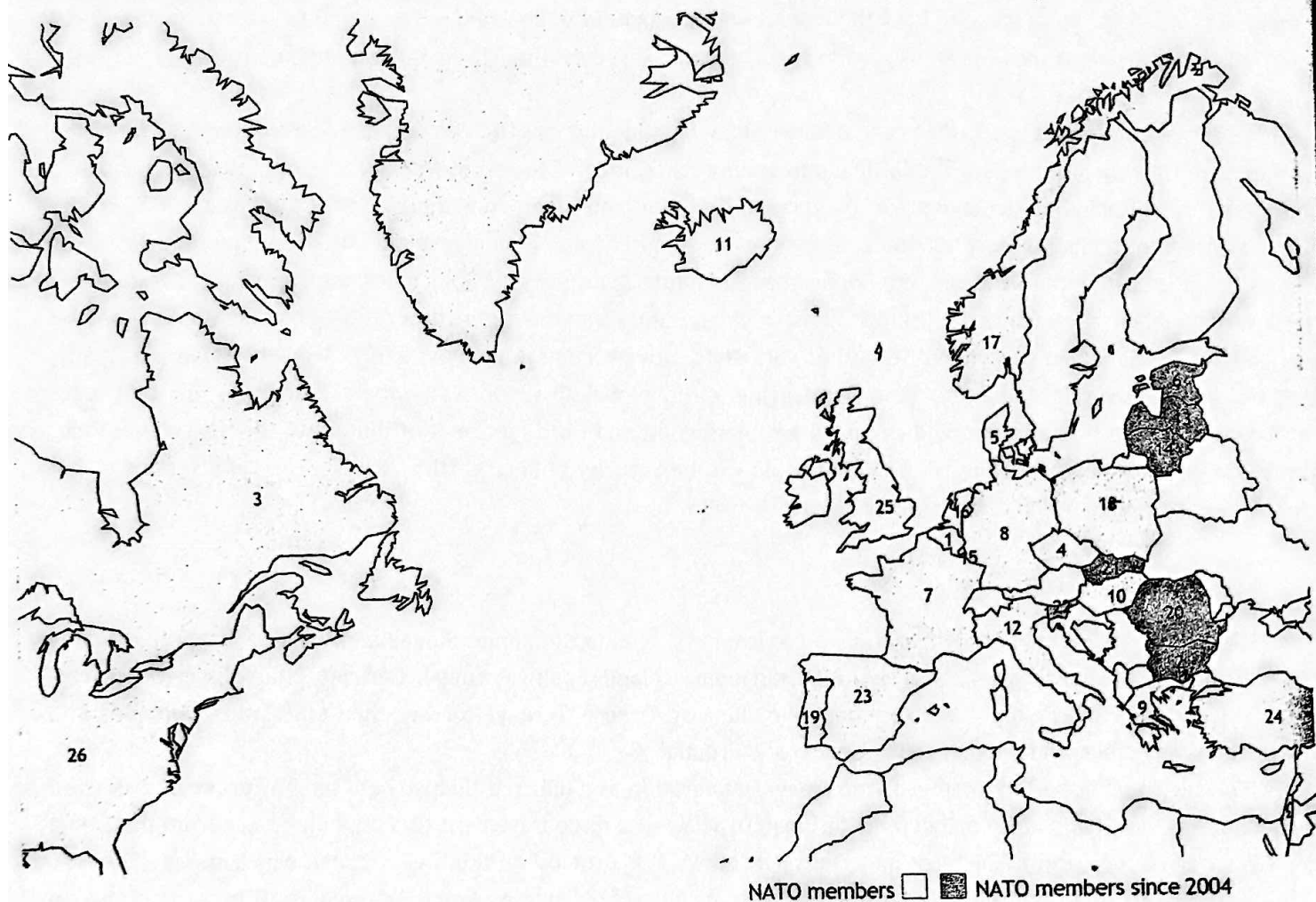
NATO, which stands for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is a military alliance between 26 European countries, Canada, and America. It was originally created in 1949 to serve as a discouragement to a possible attack from the Soviet Union (which never occurred). The most important part of NATO is Article V of the NATO Treaty, which states, "*The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all. . . .*" This is called a **mutual defense clause** and basically means that the United States must treat an attack on Latvia the same as it would treat an attack on Tennessee.

Although NATO is a multilateral organization, the United States is clearly the captain of the ship. As a rule, US troops are never under the command of a foreign general. NEVER. Because of this, NATO troops (mainly American) are ALWAYS under American command. The United States also uses NATO countries to base its own troops and station nuclear weapons. Many historians blame the United States for provoking the Cuban Missile Crisis, saying that the Russians only wanted to put nukes in Cuba because the United States had at that time stationed nukes in Turkey (a NATO member).

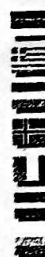
Since the Cold War, NATO has been looking for a new role in the world. Many of the former Soviet republics have since been admitted to NATO—which, by the way, really ticks off Russia. NATO expansion was promoted as an expansion of democracy and freedom into Eastern Europe. More likely, it was to make sure Russia would never be able to regain the territory. NATO has also been increasingly active in international police work, although there is no real justification for this in the NATO charter. NATO forces were heavily involved in the Bosnia conflict in 1994 and the Yugoslavia conflict in 1999, although in reality these were just American troops under a multinational flag. After September 11th attacks on the US, NATO has also become involved in the anti-terrorism game, even invoking Article V for the first time with regard to Afghanistan. Remember, the war in Afghanistan is a NATO mission, not a US mission. But let's be honest here; the US does most of the heavy lifting, as usual.



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. Don't make him angry. You wouldn't like NATO when he's angry.



Belgium (1)
Bulgaria (2)
Canada (3)
Czech Republic (4)
Denmark (5)
Estonia (6)
France (7)



Germany (8)
Greece (9)
Hungary (10)
Iceland (11)
Italy (12)
Latvia (13)
Lithuania (14)



Luxembourg (15)
Netherlands (16)
Norway (17)
Poland (18)
Portugal (19)
Romania (20)



Slovakia (21)
Slovenia (22)
Spain (23)
Turkey (24)
United Kingdom (25)
United States (26)

And the NATO role continues to become broader and more bullish lately: NATO was the central organizing entity in the 2011 invasion of Libya. Say what? What the heck did Libya do to any NATO country? Answer: Nothing, which goes to show how the entity is rapidly redefining itself here in the 21st century. It appears that NATO is fast becoming the military muscle for the objectives of 'Team West,' whether those objectives are defense, economic, or purely political. Interesting stuff, eh? And infuriating stuff to those not aligned with the NATO countries.

Fun Plaid Fact: The only country in NATO without a military force is Iceland. The Icelandic Defense Force is an American military contingent stationed permanently on the island.

~~WARSAW PACT—DEFUNCT~~

PAST Members: Soviet Union (club president), Albania (until 1968), Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany (1956–1990), Hungary, Poland, and Romania.



THE NUKE GROUP

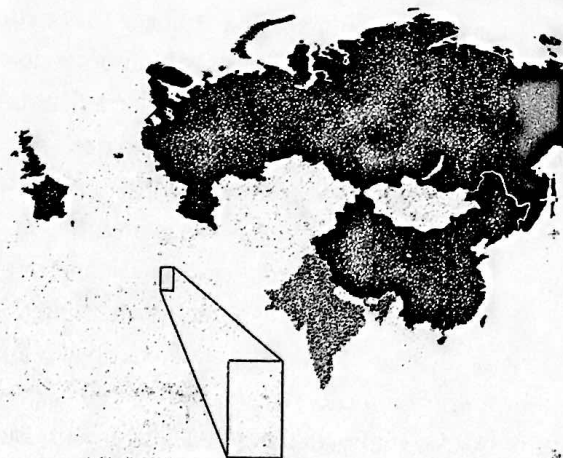
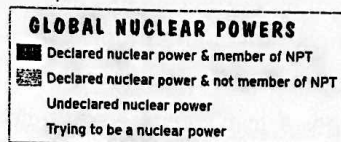
7 Members: US, Russia, UK, France, China, India, Pakistan

3 Questionable Members: Israel, North Korea, Iran

Last, but certainly not least, is a most important gang of states on planet earth with this homogenous trait: they got nuclear bombs! Or perhaps maybe they do.

Or perhaps maybe they are trying to get them. While not an "official" entity in the spirit of the other groups discussed in this chapter, I would be remiss without sticking this information in somewhere . . . and what better place than a chapter on clubs, as this particular club has enough firepower to blow up all of the other clubs on the planet? The club with the biggest clubs! But it's much more

THE NUKE CLUB



important than that if you want to understand how the world works and how geopolitical power is actually wielded in real life in our day and age. What do I mean?

Well, who is in the club? Let's start with the original declared nuclear powers: US, Russia, UK, France, and China. Hey! Wait a minute! That's the exact same group that as the UN Permanent Security Council! How true, my quick-witted friends, and that is no coincidence! These 5 countries were the first to develop, test, and therefore prove that they possessed nuclear weapons. The fact that they admitted this to the world means that they have "declared" their status. Kind of like coming out of the nuclear closet. Because of their "first-ness" and openness, these nuke powers have the veto powers at the UN, as per their permanent status on the security council.

Soon after the development of nuclear weapons, most everyone agreed it would be a horrible idea for all countries on earth to have access to these weapons, so a movement to limit them emerged, culminating in the 1970 **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty** (or NPT). This treaty has been signed by 189 countries, including the aforementioned big 5 declared nuke powers . . . only four countries are not signed up for it (more on that in a sec). The treaty has three basic pillars it strives to deal with:

1. non-proliferation, or non-spread, of nuclear weapons and/or nuclear weapon information;
2. disarmament, or getting rid of existing nuclear weapons; and
3. the right to peacefully use nuclear technology, which means all signers of the treaty are allowed to have nuclear energy, but not nuclear bombs.

As you can see, this treaty is mostly to ensure that nobody is making nuke weapons, but nuke power technology for energy production is allowed by the NPT, which makes enforcement of it tricky and a hot potato in current events. But before we get to that, what about the other possible nuke powers not yet named? That would be India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel. Ah! Yes! Those would be the exact four countries that have not signed the NPT (or dropped out of it in the case of North Korea). What a coincidence! Not! Here is the deal:

India developed and tested its nuclear weapons in 1974, and not to be outdone, Pakistan followed suit in the late 1990's. Why would these countries need nuclear weapons? Because they hate each other and have already fought three wars so far, with more to come. Once India became nuclear, Pakistan could not rest until it got the bomb as well. That's

the way rivalries work. The tension between these two countries is so great that neither will give up their right to possess, and even create more, nuclear weapons, which is why both countries have refused to sign the NPT. But they have declared and proven that they have bombs, so they make the list of nuke powers, even though they cannot legally pursue nuclear energy industries since all that stuff is also regulated by the NPT.

Who is left? Israel, of course! With no reservations, everyone on the planet knows that Israel is also a nuclear power, but they have never (openly) tested, proven, or declared it. The US and many others never want them to declare it either, for fear it would spark a regional **arms race**. Israel has probably been a nuclear power since the 1960's, and it wants to have that nuclear edge mostly in order to ensure its survival, were it to ever be attacked by surrounding states again (see chapter 20). Because of this "secret" status, Israel has refused to sign the NPT, because to do so would mean it would have to open up for inspections and declare their stockpile . . . which, again, might cause a regional arms race.

Finally, there are those who might be trying to get into this nuclear club, but aren't quite there yet. North Korea originally signed the NPT but has subsequently quit, mostly because having the elusive illusion of possibly having nuclear material is the only bargaining chip they have left to play to get international attention as their state nears collapse. The koo-koo North Koreans exploded something underground a few years back and claimed it was a nuclear device, but no one is really quite sure what the heck they actually have. Including themselves. And I'm sure you have heard plenty about Iran recently too . . . they actually are a signatory of the NPT, which gives them the right to develop nuclear energy. Which they are, while claiming peaceful intent. But some of Iran's semi-crazy leaders have already made reference to themselves as a "nuclear power," which of course they are technically not. Yet. Maybe. Wowsers, this is confusing!

Why am I throwing you all this info on the Nuke Group? Well, unless you have been hiding out in an underground nuclear bunker since the 1950's, you know that the issue of nuclear energy/nuclear weapons has become an extremely hot topic in today's world. Like radioactive hot. Like 1.21 gigawatts hot. Crazy North Korea may be developing something which it then may use to blow up a neighbor. And there is great fear of terrorist organizations obtaining nuclear material and doing something nasty with it. But most of all, the world is currently at arms with itself over what to do with Iran: half the world thinks Iran is just developing nuclear power, the other half think Iran is trying to get nuclear weapons . . . it is possibly the most divisive issue of current times, and may result in war. That's why the UN permanent Security Council is debating these issues non-stop, why Team West is at odds with the BRICS, and why current US President Barack Obama held the first-ever "Nuclear Security Summit" in Washington DC in 2010, at which all these issues and more were debated. No state currently with nuclear weapons (and the lion's share of states that don't) wants to see more states go nuclear; these things are dangerous and deadly and could spell the end of humanity! Dudes! I've seen *The Road Warrior* and *The Matrix*! It's scary! At the same time, there are those states that want nuclear weapons. With no question, nukes are the absolute best deterrent that would prevent your country from being attacked. Who wouldn't want a nuke? I mean, let's be honest here: the main reason that the Cold War never turned into a hot war was because both sides had nuclear weapons; therefore, neither side could attack without suffering the same nuclear annihilation itself. Would the US have dropped atomic weapons on Japan in World War II if Japan was equally armed? Would the US administration be openly talking about invading/bombing Iran if Iran was already a nuclear power? Having a nuclear weapon is a game-changer. No wonder some countries may still want one.

This brief section was only to alert you to the nuclear status of our planet, not to fully explain and engage all the complicated topics surrounding these weapons of ultimate destruction. Hopefully, you now at least have a handle on the hotness and how it plays out in current events and the world regions. Regions? Oh yeah! That's what this book is about! Let's get to the regions now!

